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Tributes to

Abraham Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources providing testimonials lauding the 16th President of the United States

Writings of

Edwin C. Hill

From the files of the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

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Hill, Edwin C.

Human Side of News

By Edwin C. Hill

WE have come up again in the march of time to the birth anniversary of the most revered of all Americans, except, perhaps, George Washington. One hundred and twenty - eight years have passed, almost the entire span of the history of the United States, since Abraham Lincoln was born in a log and clapboard shack—it was nothing better—in Hardin County, Kentucky.

It has taken all these years to give us the true stature of this man who was a Presence, rather than a personality. During the Civil War, and for years thereafter, he was both idolized and execrated. It is difficult to believe that writers and cartoonists for at least 20 years, up to the time of his death and after, pictured him as an uncouth country bumpkin, a slick politician given to vulgar stories. Then came the time when he became so glorified and deified that once more the true human being was obscured.

* * *

BUT time has corrected the statue and the portrait, and after all these years, we know Lincoln the man . . . the strong, patient, humorous, melancholy, sweet-souled, indomitable great gentleman that he was, for all his lowly birth. We know him for what he was.

We know him thoroughly in all his moods and deeds, even in his oddities and inconsistencies, through the years of his long struggle against poverty, through the years of his power and glory; his blighted romance, his unhappy marriage, his struggle with ambitious and insolent leaders of his own party and his own cabinet; his divine patience with his blundering generals; his sadness over the slaughter of the Civil War; his sympathy with the South, but his inflexible determination to preserve the Union.

* * *

WE can now go back to the real Lincoln—Lincoln the human being, not the myth, not the demi-god. And half gods are insignificant creatures compared to whole man. We can go back to the days when he lay flat on the floor of a log cabin, studying by the firelight—the only light he had; to the young rail splitter and country fair wrestler; to the trader flat-boating down the Mississippi to New Orleans; to the Illinois lawyer riding the circuit and winning his cases with wit and keen observation of human nature, as much as by his use of law and the evidence; to the tall, lanky politician wrapped about with a shawl, his boots mud-spattered, warming his hands in a country hotel, telling side-splitting stories by the hour to the bench and bar.

After all these years we know him now for the great human being that he was, the greatest of all Americans, save only the man who founded America; the superb human being; the actual man who dwelt, like the rest of us, in common clay; who was mortal as other men are mortal; who had his doubts and fears; who made his mistakes; who changed his ground; who smarted under defeat and knew the chill of humiliation; but a man whose character was so towering, so indestructible, so pure that his fame will endure as long as the republic stands.

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AS President he supported, by his faith and patience, the burden of the nation, as Washington, almost alone, upheld on his heroic shoulders the burden of the 13 colonies. Faith in the destiny of the country. Faith in the people. Patience with his jealous, quarreling, truculent cabinet officers. Patience with his slow, often insolent generals—not even reproving McClellan when that haughty gentleman refused to get up out of bed to receive his own President.

When General Hooker wrote to him that the country needed a dictator, he replied that only those generals who achieve success can set up dictators. He had the power of saying so much in so few words. When Hooker wanted to attack Richmond while Gen. Lee's army was threatening Washington, Lincoln wrote him: "I think Lee's army and not Richmond is your sure objective."

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(Copyright, 1937, King Features Synd., Inc.)

FEBRUARY 12, 1937 DETROIT Hill, Edwin C.

Abe Lincoln's True Stature Revealed by Years

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A great figure, homely, gangling and uncouth, careless of raiment and uncertain of voice, he was the most inspiring orator of his day. He was almost without formal education, yet few men have written nobler English. Pursued by savage malice as he resolutely saved the Union, all attacks left him kind and gentle, serene and aloof from calumny and slander.

From the very roots of the people he sprang, to accomplish a single great task. That done, he vanished, this man who so supremely blended the mystic and the simple...the iron will of a dictator with the sweetness of a child, the gentleness of a woman.

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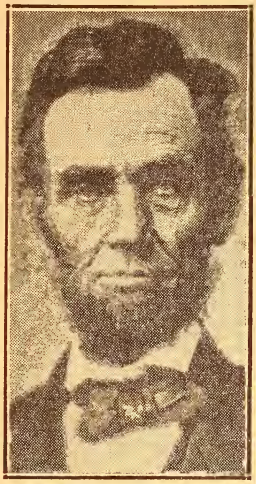
Hill, Edwin C.

The Human Side Of The News

— By — Edwin C. Hill

Baltimore News-Post - 2/13/39

YESTERDAY we celebrated one of the most appealing of American anniversaries, the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. He was fifty - one when he made that remarkable speech in Cooper Union, New York city, which converted the leading Republicans of the East to his support for the Presidential nomination.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Henry C. Bowen, editor of the New York Independent, was at work in his office one February evening, when there came a knock at the door. Editor Bowen called out: "Come in!"

Quite preoccupied with his proofs, the editor did not look up until he heard a rather high-pitched voice: "I am Abraham Lincoln."

Much later, Editor Bowen wrote this:

"I faced a very tall man wearing a high hat and carrying a comical-looking carpet-bag. My heart went into my boots as I greeted the tall gaunt stranger. His clothes were travel-stained. He looked tired and woe-begone. There was nothing in my first hasty view of the man that was at all prepossessing."

But the next night on the stage of Cooper Union this awkward-looking Illinois rail-splitter, facing such noted men as George Putnam, George Bancroft, William Cullen Bryant and Horace Greeley, delivered an address of such power and sincerity that it rang like a bell throughout the nation and made him, Lincoln, President of the United States.

He talked to that New York audience as he would have talked to any jury on the rural circuit, or to his neighbors around the grocery store.

And they responded. "The greatest man since Saint Paul," said Noah Brooks. "Tell them to run every line of this speech," said Editor William Cullen Bryant of the New York Evening Post to the Post's reporter.

So history was made. But the curious thing about it is that Mr. Lincoln would most likely not have come East at all had it not been necessary to visit his son, Robert T., who was a student at Exeter. Unfathomable are the ways of Destiny.

Read that remarkable collection of documents which was assembled within the covers of a 461-page book by Lincoln's old law partner, William H. Herndon.

Therein you will find the real Lincoln. "The Hidden Lincoln," it is called. It displays him not as a demi-god of myth, but as a great human being, with faults counting nothing against his great soul.

Senator Cullom once epitomized the character—the moral power — of Lincoln in these words:

"He was not a warrior, though brave as Caesar. He was not a statesman in the sense that Pitt and Clay were statesmen. Lincoln's power lay in his wonderful insight of the truth and his courage to proclaim it against all opposition to a listening world. In this he was more powerful and eloquent than Clay or Webster or Calhoun. In the conviction that he was right, and in a persistent advocacy of what he believed to be right, he rose above all party claims and methods . . ."

Lincoln's Birth Observance to Stress Freedom

NY Herald Tribune

Scientists and Educators Back Plan; Wallace to Talk Here on Racial Theories

2/11/39

The 130th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln on Feb. 12, 1809, will be observed this week end throughout the United States, with most of the anniversary meetings scheduled for tomorrow. A majority of the important celebrations will be under the sponsorship of the Lincoln's Birthday Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom, an organization of leading scientists and educators recently formed to "focus attention on the fact that intellectual freedom is imperative in a democracy." Professor Emeritus Franz Boas, of Columbia University, is chairman of the national committee.

The main meeting of the organization will take place at 1:30 p. m. tomorrow in the Waldorf-Astoria, where the principal speaker will be Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture. Mr. Wallace will talk on "Racial Theories and the Genetic Basis of Democracy," and his address will be broadcast from 2 to 2:30 p. m. over Station WEAF and the red network of the National Broadcasting Company.

"After Munich—What?"

Other speakers at this meeting will be Jan Masaryk, former Czechoslovakian Minister to England, whose subject will be "After Munich—What?" Professor Boas, who will discuss "Democracy and Intellectual Freedom"; Ordway Tead, member of the board of higher education, who will talk on "Science Instruction in a Democracy," and Professor Clyde R. Miller, of Teachers College, Columbia, who will speak on "The Economic Basis of Democracy and Intellectual Freedom." Professor Harold C. Urey, of Columbia, holder of a Nobel Prize for his work in chemistry, is chairman of the meeting, which will be held in the main ballroom of the hotel.

Other New York radio stations, including WHN, WNYC and WQXR, will carry the addresses of Mr. Masaryk, Dr. Tead and Professor Miller, and approximately 100 hours of radio time in the United States will be devoted to the broadcasting or rebroadcasting of speeches delivered at some thirty meetings sponsored by the committee. At 4 p. m. tomorrow in Philadelphia the principal speaker at a session in the auditorium of the University of Pennsylvania will be Senator Lewis B. Schwellenbach, Democrat, of Washington.

A special broadcast has been arranged by the committee over Station WOR and the Mutual Broadcasting System from 10:30 to 11 p. m. today. The speakers will be Professor Robert S. Lynd, of Columbia, co-author of "Middletown" and "Middletown in Transition"; Professor Urey, Professor Walter B. Cannon, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; Senator Schwellenbach and Professor Boas.

Meetings Elsewhere

Other meetings of the committee Sunday include one at 8:15 p. m. in Boston, one in Pittsburgh at 8 p. m., and meetings at various times of day at the Universities of Illinois, California, Kentucky, Missouri, West Virginia, Cincinnati, North Dakota, Virginia and Texas, Fisk University, Northwestern University, Duke University, Stanford University, at the California Institute of Technology, Claremont College and Connecticut State College, and in other cities where there will be joint gatherings of university and civic groups. More than 1,000 of the nation's educators are participating, Professor Boas said yesterday.

The birthday anniversary of Lincoln and Gen. Thaddeus Kosciusko, Polish hero of the American Revolutionary War, will be celebrated in joint exercises in City Hall Park at 4 p. m. tomorrow. Gen Kosciusko was born on Feb. 12, 1746. The meeting will be under the direction of the New York State Conference of Polish Clubs and the United Saint Stanislas Societies. Other meetings will be held by these groups in Union Square Park, and in Prospect and Highland Parks, Brooklyn.

More than 5,000 persons are expected to attend the thirty-ninth annual entertainment, reception and Lincoln's Birthday ball of the Kanawha Democratic Club, Inc., regular Tammany Hall organization of the 20th Assembly District, at the Palm Garden, 305 West Fifty-second Street, at 8:30 p. m. tomorrow. V. Palmer Wilson, former Commisisoner of Records of the Municipal Court, who has been chairman of the event for the last twenty-eight years, announced that an elaborate program, featuring stage, screen and radio stars, would be given.

B'nai B'rith Dinner

A Lincoln's Birthday dinner will be held tomorrow evening at Temple Emanu-El, Fifth Avenue and Sixty-fifth Street, by the Metropolitan Council of B'nai B'rith, at which the guest of honor will be Daniel Harris, ninety-sixth-year-old Jewish member of the Grand Army of the Republic, the oldest living Jewish soldier of the Union Army.

Raymond Massey, star of the current Broadway success, "Abe Lincoln in Illinois," will pass most of his time in the next three days repeating famous words uttered by the Civil War president at anniversary celebrations.

He will deliver at 9:30 p. m. tomorrow an abridged version of President Lincoln's famous Cooper Union address in the same hall from the same rostrum that Lincoln used, at Fourth Avenue and Eighth Street. Mr. Massey's address will high-light the union's anniversary program and will be broadcast by Station WQXR. At 2:30 p. m., over a coast-to-coast network of the Columbia Broadcasting System, Mr. Massey will deliver Lincoln's farewell address to his Springfield friends and neighbors. The speech will be transmitted to Springfield, Ill., where the American Legion is scheduled to hold its annual Lincoln's Birthday pilgrimage. Stephen F. Chadwick, national commander of the Legion, will speak there.

Boy Scouts to Participate

Mr. Massey will make several other appearances, including one Monday at the Lincoln School, 425 West 120th Street. Last night, at the regular weekly evening chapel meeting of the Salvation Army's Shelter for Unemployed Men, 535 West Forty-eighth Street, he enacted a scene for "Abe Lincoln in Illinois" pertaining to the Lincoln-Douglas debates.

Boy Scouts of Nature Study Troop 472, Kips Bay Boys' Club, will march into Union Square at 10 a. m. today and stand at attention before the statue of Lincoln. One of the boys will repeat the Gettysburg address.

The Allied Organizations of the Grand Army of the Republic will hold their annual Lincoln dinner at 7:30 p. m. tonight at Midston House, 22 East Thirty-eighth Street. There will be several speakers, and members of the cast of "Abe Lincoln in Illinois" other than Mr. Massey will take part in the program.

Memorial exercises will be held from 10:30 to 11:30 a. m. tomorrow in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, by the Union League Club of Brooklyn, in conjunction with the Republican Veterans' Association. New York Negroes will celebrate the anniversary with a radio program from 3:30 to 4 p. m. Sunday at Station WNYC, under the sponsorship of the Crispus Attucks Community Council, of Brooklyn, and will meet under the auspices of the same council at 8 p. m. Monday at Public School 35, Decatur and Lewis Avenues, Brooklyn, where the chief speaker will be Samuel Liebowitz, attorney.

Daughters of the Union

The National Society of Daughters of the Union will give a luncheon Monday at the American Woman's Association Club, 353 West Fifty-seventh Street. Mrs. Theodore R. Ramage, president general of the society, will preside, and the Rev. Duncan J. McMillen, past state commander of the G. A. R., and Mrs. Charles Augustine Robinson, national flag lady, will be guests of honor.

Student leaders and school organizations in the metropolitan area will meet Monday morning in front of the bust of Lincoln at the College of the City of New York, Convent Avenue and 135th Street, for a ceremony under the auspices of the American Student Union. The ceremony will be held in connection with the beginning of the Human Rights Roll Call of the A. S. U., which has as its objective the securing of 250,000 student and faculty signatures in demand of "wider utilization of the resources of democratic government to meet human needs." The roll call has already been indorsed by many college presidents in the United States.

The Jewish Theological Seminary, Broadway and 120th Street, announced yesterday the receipt of an item of "lincolniana" at the museum of the seminary, which bears on the religious life of Lincoln. It is the manuscript of the famous address delivered at the centennial celebration of Lincoln's birthday in 1909 by Dr. Solomon Schechter, then president of the seminary. When the address was given, it was hailed as the nearet to "a true evaluation and appreciation" of his father by Robert Todd Lincoln, the former President's son.

Hill, Edwin C.

EDWIN C. HILL

Cincinnati Enquirer 2/14/39

Human Side of the News

Lincoln's Democratic Ideal

A BIRD'S-EYE view of Lincoln birthday addresses, editorials and "letters to the editors" from all over the country indicates to this writer that the American public is gaining a new and profoundly more discerning view of the Great Emancipator.

EDWIN C. HILL.

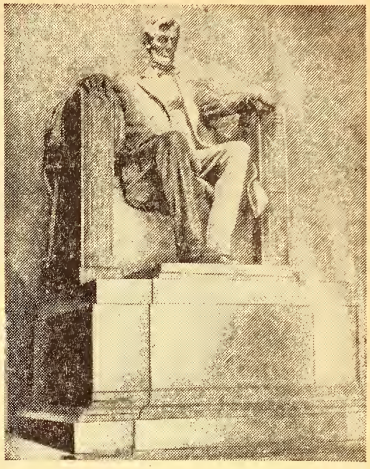
Possibly the sad example of what happens to those unhappy countries who never understood their inchoate Lincolns has induced in us new veneration and deeper understanding of a superlatively great humane genius—an understanding which cannot be frozen or precipitated in marble or bronze. A country is in a bad way when its liberators are enshrined in stone but not in human hearts. Searching through the exchanges, I find distinct evidence of a new national conception of Abraham Lincoln and what he stood for in our national destiny.

In this new understanding, I believe, we are finally catching up with Lincoln as regards his inspired insight into the true meaning of democracy. He was the world's noblest exponent of democracy as a high moral aspiration and not a political formula. It was to him an assertion of faith that truth, freedom and justice are attainable in human society and that they are governing forces if we eternally believe in them.

We have been faltering and recreant in our belief. In my undergraduate days democracy was a fait accompli, instituted by two great wars, validated by our puissance as a nation, forever continuing under its own established impetus.

If any of us had been asked to define democracy, I suppose we would have stated it concretely in terms of universal suffrage and equal rights before the law. These concretions represented magnificent attainments by our people, but to Abraham Lincoln they were instrumentalities of root principles, ordained, invigorated and continuing only to the extent of their essential moral inspiration.

Savage authoritarian onslaughts on these bulwarks of our democratic faith have given us a new realization that the life and teachings of Abraham Lincoln are of moral, rather than institutional derivation and in this, I believe, there is a new light of fervor and faith in the land, infinitely more heartening than the lip service to Lincoln before these days of drastic national self-appraisal.



Abraham Lincoln . . . "the world's noblest exponent of democracy."

Robert Benchley, writing in the New Yorker, gently ribs the new and fervid preachments of Americanism in the theater. He says:

"Almost as if it were the result of a preseason junta of playwrights at which the slogan 'Sell America!' has been adopted, the theater this year has rung with exhortations for us all to hold dear our national heritage and be Americans.

"The question here is not how skillfully the playwrights have done their work, but just whom it is aimed at. Who are these renegade fellow Americans who need arousing, and once they are aroused, what are they going to do about it? How are we dilatory patriots to know when we have reached that fine pitch of Americanism which indicates that we have made the grade and need have no more plays reminding us of our heritage?"

Abe Lincoln would have been amused at that. He was no tub-thumper. The playful Mr. Benchley is as American as the best of us, and we get his point. It is quite possible that we may overdo our new surge of enlightened patriotism, but, in this corner, we think it is all to the good. The main point is that when the playwrights dish a new belief in America, the people eat it up.

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Los Angeles Herald Express FEB. 12, 1937

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The Washington Times 2/12/37

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From the very roots of the people he sprang, to accomplish a single great task. That done, he vanished, this man who so supremely blended the mystic and the simple . . . the iron will of a dictator with the sweetness of a child, the gentleness of a woman.

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Hill, Edwin C.

Lincoln, the Man

The Human Side of the News

By Edwin C. Hill

We have come up again in the march of time to the birth anniversary of the most revered of all Americans except, perhaps, George Washington. One hundred and twenty-eight years have passed almost the entire span of the history of the United States, since Abraham Lincoln was born in a log and clapboard shack—it was nothing better — in Hardin County, Kentucky.

Edwin C. Hill

It has taken all these years to give us the true stature of this man who was a Presence, rather than a personality. During the Civil War, and for years thereafter, he was both idolized and execrated.

It was difficult to believe that writers and cartoonists for at least twenty years, up to the time of his death and after, pictured him as an uncouth country bumpkin, a slick politician given to vulgar stories. Then came the time when he became so glorified and deified that once more the true human being was obscured.

But time has corrected the statue and the portrait, and after all these years we know Lincoln, the man . . . the strong, patient, humorous, melancholy, sweet-souled, indomitable great gentleman that he was, for all his lowly birth. We know him for what he was.

We know him thoroughly in all his moods and deeds, even in his oddities and inconsistencies, through the years of his long struggle against poverty, through the years of his power and glory; his blighted romance, his unhappy marriage, his struggles with ambitious and insolent leaders of his own party and his own cabinet; his divine patience with his blundering generals; his sadness over the slaughter of the Civil War; his sympathy with the South, but his inflexible determination to preserve the Union.

ALL DEEDS KNOWN

We can now go back to the real Lincoln—Lincoln the human being, not the myth, not the demi-god. And half gods are insignificant creatures compared to whole man.

We can go back to the days when he lay flat on the floor of a log cabin, studying by the firelight—the only light he had; to the young rail splitter and country fair wrestler; to the trader flat-boating down the Mississippi to New Orleans; to the Illinois lawyer riding the circuit and winning his cases with wit and keen observation of human nature, as much as by his use of law and the evidence; to the tall, lanky politician wrapped about with a shawl, his boots mud-spattered, warming his hands in a country hotel, telling side-splitting stories by the hour to the bench and bar.

GREAT AMERICAN

After all these years we know him now for the great human being that he was, the greatest of all Americans, save only the man who founded America; the superb human being; the actual man who dwelt, like the rest of us, in common clay; who was mortal as other men are mortal; who had his doubts and fears; who made his mistakes; who changed his ground; who smarted under defeat and knew the chill of humiliation; but a man whose character was so towering, so indestructible, so pure that his fame will endure as long as the republic stands.

As President he supported, by his faith and patience, the burden of the nation, as Washington, almost alone, upheld on his heroic shoulders the burden of the thirteen colonies.

Faith in the destiny of the country. Faith in the people. Patience with his jealous, quarreling, truculent cabinet officers. Patience with his slow, often insolent generals—not even reproving McClellan when that haughty gentleman refused to get up out of bed to receive his own President.

STERLING QUALITIES

When General Hooker wrote to him that the country needed a dictator, he replied that only those generals who achieve success can set up dictators. He had the power of saying so much in a few words. When Hooker wanted to attack Richmond while General Lee's army was threatening Washington, Lincoln wrote him:

"I think Lee's army and not Richmond is your sure objective."

To his own weariness and melancholy he applied the balm of humor. He loved to poke a little fun at his generals. He got word, one day, that a brigadier general and twelve mules had been captured by the Confederates.

"That's bad," said the President. "I can find a brigadier general in five minutes, but those mules cost two hundred dollars apiece."

A great figure, homely, gangling and uncouth, careless of raiment and uncertain of voice, he was the most inspiring orator of his day. He was almost without formal education, yet few men have written nobler English. Pursued by savage malice as he resolutely saved the Union, all attacks left him kind and gentle, serene and aloof from calumny and slander.

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Hill, Edwin C.

San Francisco Call Bulletin 2/12/37

Human Side of the News *By Edwin C. Hill*

Man for the Ages

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* * *

WE KNOW HIM thoroughly in all his moods and deeds, even in his oddities and inconsistencies, through the years of his long struggle against poverty, through the years of his power and glory; his blighted romance, his unhappy marriage, his struggles with ambitious and insolent leaders of his own party and his own cabinet; his divine patience with his blundering generals; his sadness over the slaughter of the Civil War; his sympathy with the South, but his inflexible determination to preserve the Union.

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Hill, Edwin H.

Human Side of the News

February 12, 1849, When Lincoln Was Forty.

By Edwin C. Hill

The gentleman from Illinois sat alone in his room in Mrs. Spriggs' boarding house.

Outside, the chill wind blew through the streets of the shambling city which he had heard described as being like "Jerusalem the day that it was sacked by Titus."

Downstairs in the parlor his fellow boarders were debating the affairs of state and drinking their toddies.

Around the corner his athletic young cronies were knocking over the pins in the alleys.

But the solitary man kept to the seclusion of the four bare walls. He was in the mood neither for the niceties of parlor conversation nor for the coarse quips of the bowling alleys.

He rested his smooth-shaven chin in his large, bony, calloused hands and stared into space.

He had come to 40—and to failure.

It was bitter to realize it. He tried not to believe it.

But there were the letters from back home—from his ambitious, petulant wife and from his loyal and trusted law partner.

They told him that his political fortunes were ended forever. And deep down in his heart he knew it to be so.

No one to blame but himself!

How his mind, which could ponder on self-destruction, must have been tortured by self-recrimination!

He had counted himself shrewd, a master politician. And not without reason. Against odds and circumstances which few men had ever been asked to face; he had fought his way to the heights.

At 38 he was the sole member of his party elected to Congress from his state. The world was his oyster, nothing but green pastures lay ahead.

Then the sudden and precipitous fall!

He had committed the cardinal sin of politics—had allowed himself to be caught and marked on the wrong side of the fence.

He had opposed the war in a bungling, partisan way; had let himself out on a limb and had seen the trunk sawed from under him.

The Democrats had carried his congressional district and had even won the state for Cass.

Such was the immediate past.

What of the immediate future?

Twenty days remained in the life of the Thirtieth Congress.

Like a condemned man he would live out those three short weeks, and for him there would be no reprieve.

The fourth of March would come, he would pack his carpetbag and take his farewell—a long farewell—to all that greatness which had been but a mirage.

If only his party would give him an obscure commissionership, or the governorship of a remote territory, he would be content. But no, there was no cote empty for this lame duck.

The city was Washington—the night was February 12, 1849—the man was the Representative in Congress from the Seventh Illinois District.

Forty, and defeat! Fifty-two—and President of the United States!

Forty, and nothing ahead except riding the circuit on old Buck, arguing petty cases before petty juries! Fifty-four—and the Gettysburg address!

Forty—and the disillusioned politician! Fifty-six—and the statesman, giving to his world and the worlds to come The Second Inaugural!

Forty—and a failure! Fifty-six—and they wrote his epitaph in these five words: "He belongs to the Ages!"

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Hill, Edwin C.

Lincoln, the Man

We Know Him Better as the Years Go On

By Edwin C. Hill

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The Cleveland Post-Enquirer

HILL, EDWIN C.

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